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SUBIC BAY NAVAL COMPLEX - ARE THERE ALTERNATIVES?

BY

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### **SUBIC BAY NAVAL COMPLEX--ARE THERE ALTERNATIVES?**

#### **AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT**

by

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## ABSTRACT

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The current controversy between the governments of the Republic of the Philippines and the United States over Subic Bay naval complex in the Philippines is of prime concern for both countries. The base serves the interests of both countries militarily, politically and, especially for the Philippines, economically. It is also a source of antagonism between the United States and the Philippines for essentially the same three reasons. However, the controversy has seemingly ended. On 31 December 1991, Philippine President Corozon Aquino ordered that Subic Bay revert to Filipino military control as of 1 January 1992.<sup>1</sup> Her order was the result of the Philippine Senate's rejection of a new bases treaty on 17 September 1991.<sup>2</sup> In consonance with the Constitution of the Philippines this requires that all foreign bases on Filipino soil must be removed unless a treaty is approved authorizing them to remain. Yet, with Filipino presidential and congressional elections in May 1992, the complete closure of Subic Bay may not be a foregone conclusion.<sup>3</sup>

For the United States, Subic Bay represents a political and military commitment to the security of the entire Southeast Asian region, not just to the Philippines. Furthermore, it enhances the United States' ability to conduct sustained operations in the Indian Ocean and its adjoining waters. Subic Bay also serves as an outpost for the United States interest of watching over the former Soviet Union. If the United States were to leave Subic Bay, this would no doubt erode somewhat the United States' ability to continue to watch the former Soviet Union in a forward deployed manner. It is for this fact that some senior United States political and military leaders desire a continued U.S. military presence in the Philippines at almost any cost.

One question comes to mind though: Is a continued presence at Subic Bay vital to the United States in view of the fact that, politically, the world is changing? For example, tensions between the United States and the former Soviet Union are fading thus reducing the possibility of a military conflict between the two countries. Within Asia, Japan with its new found economic muscle may finally be taking its place on the world stage and thus influence international events. Or as Professor Paul Kennedy opines in his book, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, the United States may be in danger of becoming a victim of "imperial overreach". If so, the U.S. must reduce its overseas commitments as well as strengthen its internal economy, if it is not to decline in absolute as well as relative terms when compared against other powers.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this essay is not to answer that question. For all its importance to the United States, it overlooks the basic fact that eventually Subic Bay will be closed completely. It is not a question of if the bases are going to be closed completely, but when. The when could be as early as the end of December 1992. It would be prudent then for the United States to have clearly defined alternatives available to it. This essay will instead explore the alternatives the United States may have in relocating the assets of Subic Bay within the region. As part of this, the background of the base controversy as well as the Filipino and American views of the controversy will be discussed.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE BASES CONTROVERSY**

The controversy over Subic Bay and the now defunct Clark Air Base is not a recent phenomenon. Its roots can be traced back to the very beginning of the United States' involvement in the Philippines.

In the late 1890s, influential politicians in the United States, in particular Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, were coming under the sway of Captain Alfred T. Mahan's writings on the value of Sea Power to the state.<sup>5</sup> Among other things, Mahan postulated that the United States required overseas bases to support its naval and military operations, which in turn supported U.S. economic and political interests. The Spanish American War in 1898 presented the opportunity for the United States to acquire such overseas bases in the Philippines. This was exactly what the United States did, although there was resistance by the Filipinos, who desired their own independence.

By 1902, U.S. military forces had succeeded in quelling Filipino nationalists who opposed the United States' presence in the Philippines as much as they opposed their previous Spanish colonial rulers. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt designated the area about the old Spanish naval base at Subic Bay a U.S. naval reservation. In that same year, Roosevelt also authorized the establishment of a cavalry post at Fort Stotsenburg. This eventually grew and became Clark Field when the army constructed an air strip there in 1917.<sup>6</sup> From this point on, these new bases, as well as others established later, became a point of contention between nationalistic Filipinos and their American colonial overlords.



In the early 1930s, the movement for Filipino independence was gaining momentum in both the Philippines and the United States. This movement eventually resulted in the Tydings-McDuffie or Philippine Independence Law of 1934. This law was essentially a revised version of the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Law of 1933, but it eliminated certain articles which were regarded as unacceptable to nationalist Filipinos, lead by Manuel Quezon. With regard to the bases, both laws said that they were to be retained. As a result of World War II, the Tydings-McDuffie Law was amended in June 1944 to give the United States the right to "retain military, naval and air bases in the Philippines for the mutual protection of the Philippines and the United States and for the maintenance of the peace in the Pacific."<sup>7</sup> After the Philippines gained its independence in 1946, this "right" was codified by the Military Bases Agreement (MBA) of March 1947.<sup>8</sup> The MBA, which has been revised several times over the past forty-five years, thus became the center piece for the current controversy over the Philippine bases.

### **FILIPINO VIEWPOINT**

The Filipino viewpoint is a complex one. It revolves about three issues; Philippine sovereignty, Philippine national security and economics. These three issues are interconnected, but some Filipino critics of the MBA like to stress one issue at the expense of the other two, further complicating objective resolution of base problem. This section of the essay will briefly discuss each issue.

## **Philippine Sovereignty**

The issue of Philippine Sovereignty lies at the heart of the bases controversy. It has been an issue with elite Filipinos since as early as 1933. This was evidenced by the opposition of Manuel Quezon to the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Law of 1933 with its insistence of base rights for the United States. Quezon considered that "the retention of military and naval reservations by the United States violated the national dignity and sovereign rights of the country [Philippines]."<sup>9</sup>

This attitude has carried over to the present. Roland G. Simbulan, a leading Filipino critic of the bases and also a scholar at the University of the Philippines, writes:

Today, the bases are still the most visible vestiges of colonialism in the Philippines. As the Anti-Bases Coalition of the Philippines declares: "The bases impair our national sovereignty and independence, deprive our people of the full use and control of our national patrimony, support U.S. intervention in our internal affairs, serve as staging grounds for gunboat diplomacy and interventions in the internal affairs of other states. They strengthen authoritarian rule ... Promote militarization of our country, and lead to the spread of prostitution and other social vices, and the derogation of our native values. They serve as magnets of nuclear attack."

Thus the struggle really becomes an all-sided struggle for national independence and democracy...<sup>10</sup>

The views expressed by Simbulan are typical of Filipino elites who oppose the retention of the bases. In summary, they feel that as long as the United States retains its military presence in the Philippines, the Philippines is not a truly independent country, able to conduct its affairs as it wishes. This viewpoint gained popular support as demonstrated by the large anti-

base rallies in Manila during the 1988 MBA renegotiations. Demonstrations were again staged during the treaty deliberations in the summer of 1991.

More significantly, this view was held by many members of the Philippine Senate. This body, under the revised 1986 Philippine Constitution, must approve by a two-thirds majority any treaty which retains U.S. bases on Philippine soil. In this regard, the Constitution required that when the MBA expired in 1991, the bases must be closed, unless a treaty was negotiated.<sup>11</sup> When they came to vote on the new treaty, twelve of the twenty-three senators voted to reject the treaty.<sup>12</sup> Their stated reason was that the bases violated Philippine sovereignty.

#### **Philippine National Security**

The bases were viewed by the Filipino leadership as having three distinct roles which contributed to Philippine security.<sup>13</sup>

The first, and most important, of these roles was how the bases contributed to the Philippine's internal security. The most pressing security problem for the Philippine government today is the insurgency campaign being conducted by the Philippine Communist Party (PCP) through its military arm the New Peoples Army (NPA). The bases contributed only indirectly to the Philippines internal security problem. No U.S. forces or U.S. operated equipment was employed to assist the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFRP) in its counterinsurgency operations. The only aid came indirectly from the money paid through the MBA for the purchase of military hardware and training. The bases themselves were not even used for conducting operations against the NPA, even though the bases were under (theoretically) Filipino control. In this regard the bases were not seen as being an asset to the Philippines most pressing national security problem.

The second major role played by the bases was their contribution to the regional security of the Southeast Asian area. Here the Filipinos see that the bases did play a significant role in maintaining the peace and security of the region. In the words of Fidel V. Ramos, the Philippines Secretary of National Defense:

At the the regional level, here in Southeast Asia, the South China Sea and the Western Pacific rim, the U.S. facilities contribute significantly to security. They help protect the maritime chokepoints in the region by keeping commercial sealanes open....Not only do the U.S. facilities contribute to regional security, they also help make possible the continued economic prosperity of the region. It is certainly in the Philippine interest that the power balance in the region is maintained, tensions lessened and stability enhanced.<sup>14</sup>

The last role of the bases was for U.S. global security commitments. As some of these commitments do not impact directly on the security of the Philippines, the use of the bases for strictly U.S. interests was controversial. One of the primary fears of Filipino opponents to the bases was that if the United States became involved in a military confrontation with a third country, usually assumed to be the Soviet Union, then Subic Bay and Clark Field could be subjected to attack with either conventional or nuclear weapons.<sup>15</sup> This in turn made the Philippines a target in a war not of its own making. Thus, the presence of the bases may actually reduce the national security of the Philippines. As Defense Secretary Ramos stated: "No one seems too happy with the thought of getting involved with the other global entanglements of the U.S."<sup>16</sup>

In sum, the bases did provide some protection for Philippine national security, but on the whole the bases did not provide assistance in combatting the main national security problem facing the country; that of the NPA

insurgency. This coupled with the fact that the Philippines might become involved in a war not of its own, led Filipino opponents of the bases to conclude that the bases must go and the sooner the better.

### **Economics**

The economic aspect of the bases played an important role in Filipino thinking. The Philippines is in grave economic condition. It is heavily in debt, and almost forty-four per-cent of the country's annual budget is detailed for servicing that debt.<sup>17</sup> This leaves very little money to deal with the myriad of other serious economic and social problems pressing down on the Philippine government. The natural disasters of the last several years have only compounded the problem. Therefore the money provided by the United States as compensation for the use of the bases was extremely important to the government.

It is within this context that opponents of the bases feel that the Philippines is not being adequately compensated for the bases. This view was further strengthened when Filipinos compared the amount of money they received as opposed to countries like Turkey, Egypt and Israel. These countries received larger sums without providing similar types of base facilities.<sup>18</sup>

This fact was deemed unfair by opponents to the bases. In turn, this led to the stance taken by Philippine Foreign Secretary Manglapus during the 1988 MBA renegotiations. He pressed the United States to provide \$1.2 billion annually or \$2.4 billion over the remaining two years (1990-91) of the MBA. This proposal was rejected by the United States as being too expensive. From the Filipino viewpoint it was fair.

In the end, however, the Government of the Philippines settled for much less. The October 1988 amendment to the MBA provided for the United

States to provide the Philippines with a total of \$1.46 billion over the 1990-91 time period. Of this, \$962 million was to be given in the form of military, food, developmental and housing aid. The remaining \$500 million was to be in the form of debt relief.<sup>19</sup> The results of the negotiations deeply disappointed the base's opponents and lead them to charge that President Aquino had sold out the Philippines to the United States. To the opponents, the government should have held out for the greater amount. Their argument was that if the United States did not agree, then the government should have exercised its right under the MBA and Constitution to terminate the agreement in 1991.

A similar stance was again taken by Manglapus during the 1990 and 1991 treaty negotiations. He pressed for \$825 million per year for a maximum base extension of seven years.<sup>20</sup> However, the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in June 1991 effectively destroyed the Filipino negotiating position. Manglapus was forced to settle for \$550 million in 1991 and \$203 million per year for a maximum ten year base extension.<sup>21</sup>

Another major concern of the opponents of the bases was the direct daily economic impact of the bases on the Philippines economy. They realized that the estimated 28 million pesos which daily flowed into the local economy from the bases was extremely important to the Philippines. The direct employment of some 68,000 Filipinos by the bases was also a benefit. But the opponents of bases pointed out that the social impact of the bases had a negative effect on some parts of Philippine society. Prostitution, drug abuse and other social evils were, in their view, primarily caused by the presence of the bases. This added further emotional fuel for the opponents argument for the removal of the bases.

The issues of Philippine sovereignty, national security and economics were all interrelated with the presence of the U.S. bases. The feeling grew among Filipinos that the bases may not be in their country's best interest. The Philippine Senate's action in rejecting the new bases treaty was the culmination of that view. Yet, as the economic impact of the closure of Subic Bay (Clark Air Base was officially closed on 31 December 1991) becomes reality, the views of influential Filipinos may change. The elections in May 1992 could see a reversal of support for Subic Bay.

### **UNITED STATES VIEWPOINT**

In some respects, the United States was caught between a rock and a hard spot with regard to the bases. The United States viewed the Philippine bases as important to Philippine national security, vital to Southeast Asian security and very essential to U.S. policy of global containment of the Soviet Union. Therefore the United States did not want to give up its bases which were built up at enormous cost over the course of forty-five years.

#### **Sovereignty**

The United States recognizes that the Philippines is a sovereign state with a will of its own. The issue of Philippine sovereignty was of major importance to the United States,<sup>22</sup> and as far as the bases were concerned, the United States will abide by wishes of the Philippines. As of 31 December 1992, the sovereignty issue will be resolved. The issues of Philippine security and economic development may have become moot points.

In the past, the will of the Philippines has, not without some U.S. pressure, coincided with the desires of the United States. This was so until the ouster of President Marcos by President Cory Aquino in 1985. Since that

time, the views of the governments of the Philippines and the United States have diverged somewhat. This was most strikingly evident in the adoption, in 1986, of the new Philippine Constitution. It has an article requiring the removal of foreign bases by the end 1991. If the United States wants to be seen as respecting Philippine sovereignty, then it must remove its bases from the Philippines. As former U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz indicated during the 1988 MBA negotiations, the United States would leave [the bases] if the Filipino people wished it.<sup>23</sup>

The wishes of the Filipinos, as expressed by their Senate, dictated the closure of the base(s). President Aquino's order of 31 December 1991 made it official. This, of course, is subject to any negotiated treaty (as authorized by the Philippine Constitution) between the two countries allowing the retention of the bases. The May 1992 elections could lead to negotiations for a new bases treaty.<sup>24</sup>

#### **Security and Economics**

The United States' presence in the Philippines provides that country with its only respectable defense against possible foreign aggression. However, this defense was only afforded to external attack as stipulated in Article III of the U.S. - Republic of the Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty of August 30, 1951.<sup>25</sup> The Philippines is therefore required to defend itself from internal security threats. Although under the March 1947 Military Assistance Agreement, the United States can assist by "the furnishing of arms, ammunition, equipment and supplies; certain aircraft and naval vessels, and instruction and training assistance by the Army and Navy of the United States."<sup>26</sup> The Filipinos, however, are to alone conduct operations against any internal security threat.



Admittedly, there is presently only a small external threat to the Philippines. Subic Bay then assumes a greater role in the defense of the Southeast Asian region, of which the Philippines is part. This forms one of the two most important foundations for the United States wanting to retain its base in the Philippines. The other cornerstone is the global United States concern of watching the actions of the former Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup>

The United States recognizes that the Philippines has severe economic problems and that the compensation (or rent in the Filipino view) the U.S. paid to the Philippines was an important factor in that country's annual budget. Over the years, the United States agreed to pay varying levels of compensation to the Philippines for the use of the bases. This compensation was usually divided into three areas; military assistance, economic support and development assistance. As a result of the 1988 MBA negotiations the compensation the United States paid to the Philippines amounted to \$962 million over a two year period. The United States believed that this was a fair and equitable arrangement, especially in view of U.S. budget constraints.

The United States, in response to Filipino critics, also pointed out that the bases provided substantial secondary sources of income to the Philippine Government. The bases were the second largest employer of Filipino workers (after the Philippine government itself) and that the taxes paid by these workers contributed over \$5 million a year to the Philippine government. In addition to these payments, the Philippine government gained directly and indirectly from the money spent by U.S. servicemen in the Philippines. The U.S. argued that if the United States were forced to leave, the Philippine government would be hard pressed to make up the money lost by these secondary sources of income.<sup>28</sup> This fact could ultimately provide the biggest leverage the United States has in negotiating a new treaty for the retention of

Subic Bay past 1992. However, this hinges on the outcome of the upcoming elections.

### **SUBIC BAY NAVAL COMPLEX AND CLARK AIR BASE**

The principle base remaining in the Philippines, Subic Bay Naval Station, today represents over forty-five years of investment and building worth billions of dollars. In terms of only money spent on the bases they are irreplaceable. For this amount of money, what does the largest naval base outside the continental United States provide for U.S. security?

First of all the location of the base is near the strategic sea lines of communications traversing the South China Sea, Malacca, Sunda and Lumboc Straights. From the base, U.S. Navy ships and aircraft can provide support and protection to shipping of allied and friendly nations. Secondly, the base demonstrates U.S. resolve to protect regional countries from possible outside aggression. This is also coupled with the United States' watching over the former Soviet Union. Thirdly, the base provides logistical support to U.S. forward deployed forces operating in the Southeast Asian region and in the Indian Ocean. The base also serves as a means of providing U.S. support to the Philippines if it is faced with an external threat. In the words of the official U.S. Philippine Embassy briefing book on the base, Subic Bay provides:

...a ready deterrent against potential threats to peace in the region. This security shield permits the Philippines and its neighbors to avoid excessive military expenses and to concentrate scarce resources on the economic development that is crucial to long-term growth and stability.<sup>29</sup>

#### **Subic Bay Naval Complex**

Subic Bay functioned as the primary port facility, training area and logistics support base for the U.S. Seventh Fleet, which has operating

responsibilities in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans. The base itself has all the necessary support facilities, including communications facilities, to provide a wide and full range of services to the fleet. The Naval Supply Depot and the Ship Repair Facility (SRF) are the two biggest assets of the base. Because of these two facilities, Seventh Fleet units can be maintained in a state of high operational readiness.

Specifically, Subic Bay provides the United States with over 1.75 million square feet of storage space, 110 million gallons of petroleum product storage and a magazine area capable of storing 46,000 tons of munitions of various types. SRF Subic Bay has 800,000 square feet of work and machine shop space, three working wharfs and four floating drydocks capable of handling all ships with the exception of aircraft carriers.<sup>30</sup>

A part of Subic Bay Naval Station is occupied by Cubi Point Naval Air Station. Numerous maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) operate out of Cubi as well as periodically deployed tactical aircraft. These aircraft primarily conduct antisubmarine warfare (ASW) patrols, but they also have the capability to conduct various types of war at sea strike operations. The ASW Operations Center at Cubi Point also provides coordination for conducting ASW operations in the South China Sea and other adjacent waters.

The rest and recreation opportunities afforded, both on and off base, also provides for significant morale building which has a positive impact on fleet readiness.

#### **Clark Air Base**

Clark Air Base has ceased operations and reverted to full Filipino control due to the devastation caused by the eruptions of Mount Pinatubo. However, a brief review of its former capabilities is helpful in understanding how difficult it will be to replace.

Clark Air Base served as the headquarters for the Thirteenth Air Force. Under its immediate operational control were the Third Tactical Fighter Wing, composed of the 3rd and 90th Tactical Fighter Squadrons. During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm the aircraft were relocated out of the Philippines to support the war effort. The aircraft never returned. Prior to that, these aircraft provided the primary air defense and power projection forces for the protection of the Philippines and other areas of Southeast Asia. Also located at Clark were the 6200th Tactical Fighter Training Group and its 26th Aggressor Squadron. These units provide excellent air combat training for Navy and Air Force pilots operating out of the Philippines as well as allied pilots. Clark further served as the primary logistic hub for air shipments to and from Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

The air base itself provided modern maintenance facilities for the upkeep and repair of the entire U.S. Air Force inventory of aircraft in the Western Pacific. Its primary runway was 10,500 feet long and capable of handling any aircraft. It had a 200,000 cubic foot capacity for ammunition storage, 3 million square feet of supply storage space and the ability to store 25 million gallons of petroleum products.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to the aviation units at Clark, there were a number of medical, rescue and communications facilities. These facilities, as with the similar ones at Subic Bay, greatly enhanced the operational readiness of U.S. forces operating in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean.

## **ALTERNATIVES TO SUBIC BAY NAVAL COMPLEX**

There is no doubt that Subic Bay (and Clark Air Base) significantly enhanced the United States' ability to operate in the Western Pacific and

Indian Ocean. In terms of location and facilities it is probably irreplaceable. This is not just due to the monetary aspect of moving the base but also to the fact that there is probably no other location in that part of the world which could or would support such a concentration of military might. Yet for all their capabilities, can the United States operate without the Subic Bay? The answer to that question is yes. It would not be easy and would entail a great shift in the manner in which U.S. forces operate in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean. However, U.S. forces would still be essentially able to carry out the same types of missions.

Subic Bay allows the United States to more easily carry out its forward deployed strategy. If the base was not available to the United States this would not prevent the United States from continuing with that strategy. Therefore while the base makes for ease of action, it is not critical to the survival of the United States or to its ability to conduct forward deployed operations. Since it appears that by 31 December 1992 the United States will be forced to close Subic Bay, this section of the essay will examine some alternatives to the Philippine bases.

## ASEAN

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), composed of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei and the Philippines, is a loose, non-military organization. These countries are concerned primarily with maintaining their independence, internal security and developing economically.<sup>32</sup> In this regard, there is more political/economic cooperation between the member countries than military. The ASEAN countries, as a whole, did not want to be involved in superpower conflicts and therefore they were somewhat suspicious of what they saw as the United States'

overwhelming concern with the global Soviet threat. This has led, in the past, to two of the ASEAN countries, Indonesia and Malaysia, to propose that Southeast Asia become a Nuclear Free Zone and a Zone of Peace and Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN).<sup>33</sup> These two countries in particular, were very interested in maintaining their non-aligned status in the world view.

On the other hand, the ASEAN countries realize that the United States has been instrumental in maintaining the security of the region over the years. Although as a group, they have not publicly supported the retention of U.S. bases in the Philippines, privately they have indicated that the bases should remain.<sup>34</sup> However, within ASEAN there is no consensus on whether the bases should be relocated in the region when they are forced from the Philippines.

Indonesia and Malaysia, in view of their non-aligned policies, would be reluctant to accept a base. Brunei, which is friendly with the United States, also would probably not accept a large U.S. presence. The country is too small to support a large influx of Americans. Such an influx could inevitably lead to clashes with its Moslem culture and possibly destabilize the Sultan's regime. Additionally, the country's infrastructure could not support the ships and aircraft which would be stationed there. A large construction program would have to be undertaken whose funding would be highly questioned in Congress. Therefore, the likelihood of major U.S. facilities being relocated to Brunei is also remote.

However, all three countries have indicated that port visits by Navy ships can continue. Also they would provide limited servicing of ships and aircraft on a commercial contract basis.<sup>35</sup>

Thailand and Singapore, of all the ASEAN countries, would probably be the most disposed to accept U.S. facilities on their soil. Both maintain

relatively close ties with the United States and view the U.S. presence in the region as a positive factor. Both countries also conduct frequent military exercises with various U.S. forces. They are both, however, less than ideal places to relocate bases.

The United States operated several large air bases in Thailand during the Vietnam War and these are still available for use. These could be acceptable alternatives to Clark Air Base. However, port facilities to support afloat units are lacking. These would have to be constructed at significant cost to the United States. Additionally, potential sites for port facilities are not in the best geographic areas for access to the South China Sea. All would have to be located in the northern portion of the Gulf of Thailand, at least one day steaming time from the main north/south shipping lanes of the South China Sea. Furthermore, the Gulf of Thailand is a relatively shallow body of water which would preclude submerged nuclear submarine operations until those units reached the deeper waters of the South China Sea. If there were no other alternatives, then relocating bases to Thailand could be done. However, the cost and the tactical/strategic difficulties outlined above make Thai bases only marginally acceptable.

Singapore, on the other hand, has well developed air and port facilities. The country could support the additional presence of major afloat units quite easily. Logistics flights in and out of Singapore could use the international airport as a stopover point. However, storage facilities for large quantities of supplies is very limited. Singapore could in no way match the supply facilities located in the Philippines. This is one major drawback. A second drawback is that there is limited room for expansion of air facilities. This would preclude the stationing, on a permanent basis, sizable forward deployed tactical aviation units, such as the two fighter squadrons which

were located at Clark Air Base. U.S. Navy maritime patrol aircraft and U.S. Air Force tactical aircraft do, however, conduct short term deployments to Singapore.

Singapore also suffers a geographic drawback as well. Although the country is ideally positioned at the southern entrance to the Straits of Malacca, thus allowing easy control of that strategic strait, the waters are extremely shallow and restricted. This precludes submerged nuclear submarine operations until the submarines transit almost a day to the deeper waters of the South China or Andaman Seas.

The greatest benefits to be derived from Singapore are its port facilities and the availability of its international airport as a logistics stopover point for missions to or from the Indian Ocean. As it stands, the United States already uses those facilities to support current operations. Use of those facilities will be further expanded as a result of President Bush's visit to Singapore in early January 1992. He reached an agreement with Singapore's Prime Minister Goh to relocate a shore based Navy logistics command (CTF-73) to the former Royal Navy base at Sembawang.<sup>36</sup> However, permanently stationing major tactical units in Singapore would not greatly enhance the United States' ability to carry out its policies in Southeast Asia.

In sum, the ASEAN states do not offer the best solution to relocating U.S. bases. The political support for a major U.S. presence in those countries is not strong, thus the U.S. could find itself facing the same situation as it is now facing in the Philippines. The expense of relocating and building new facilities would be great and those potential facilities are not positioned in a very good geo-strategical location. In view of these drawbacks, the United States should not press ASEAN countries to accept U.S. facilities other than what has been agreed upon in Singapore. The United States should continue



to maintain its cooperation with these countries as it continues to make routine forward deployments in the region. Permanent support for those forces would have to come from outside ASEAN.

#### **Taiwan**

Of all the countries outside of the Philippines, Taiwan probably has the best location and facilities available for supporting relocated U.S. bases. The location of Taiwan at the northern entrance to the South China Sea is ideal for patrolling both the South China and Philippine Seas. The country is also within aerial support range of U.S. facilities located on Okinawa, thus allowing mutual support for both islands. In terms of location, Taiwan is probably in a better strategic position than the Philippines for carrying out U.S. operations in the entire Western Pacific region. Although it is off the direct aerial transit route to the Indian Ocean, afloat units transiting to that area would not have to deviate greatly from already established transit lanes.

In an article in *Global Affairs*, retired Republic of China Vice Admiral Tun Hwa Ko points out that Taiwan offers superior logistic and base facilities.<sup>37</sup> The country possesses several suitable naval bases as well as air fields which would alleviate the need for substantial new construction. These modern facilities are also capable of handling all the logistic requirements of forward deployed U.S. forces. The Republic of China (ROC) armed forces operate primarily with U.S. supplied weapons or their clones, thus they have an indigenous work force capable of supporting most U.S. weapon systems. In addition, there is internal political support for the bases.

On the surface, then, it appears that Taiwan would be an ideal place to relocate the bases. However, as Tun Hwa Ko points out, the United States has decided that its national interests lies with bettering relations with the Peoples Republic of China (P.R.C.). If the United States were to relocate bases

on Taiwan, this would further strain relations between the P.R.C. and the U.S. It is therefore extremely unlikely that the U.S. would move even a token force to Taiwan when the bases are forced to relocate. Although, if for any reason, relations with the P.R.C. take a serious turn for the worse, the option to use Taiwanese facilities will still be there. This fact should remain in the back of strategic planners minds.

#### Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK)

Both Japan and the ROK are also areas outside of Southeast Asia where the U.S. could relocate some assets. They both offer modern support facilities and have in the past supported U.S. policies in Asia. However, these countries are poor alternatives.

The primary reason is that there would be little domestic support for an increased presence of U.S. forces in these countries. As it stands today, the already significant U.S. forces presently stationed in Japan and the ROK are being met with increasing local hostility. The controversy over night landing practice by Navy aircraft at Astugi, Japan and recent turmoil over the presence of the U.S Army headquarters complex in Seoul, Korea are just two examples of mounting public opposition to U.S. forces.

In the case of Japan, the Japanese government may soon be pressing for removal of U.S. forces. An indication of this was stated in an article in the *Tokyo Shimbun* which discussed the selection of Secretary of Defense Cheney. In the article Japanese Defense Agency Director General Tazawa stated that he wanted to discuss with Secretary Cheney the Japan-U.S. defense cooperation structure. Part of this will include a discussion of the return to Japan of U.S. military bases.<sup>38</sup>

Notwithstanding public opposition, which is unlikely to be overcome, relocating U.S. forces to Japan or the ROK does little to enhance U.S. operations

in the Southeast Asian region. Japan and the ROK are both geographically removed from the area (with the exception of U.S. forces located on Okinawa). To reach the South China Sea, afloat units have a nominal transit time of 3-4 days. This is approximately the same as from Guam to the South China Sea. Tactical aircraft, with the exception of MPA, operating out of Okinawa would only be effective in the extreme northern portion of the South China Sea if no other support facilities were available. The relocation of forces to Japan and the ROK would enhance the ability of U.S. forces to operate in the Northwest Pacific instead of Southeast Asia.<sup>39</sup> This would not be the objective of such a relocation.

#### **Guam**

The only way to avoid the problem of access to foreign territory is to locate bases on U.S. soil. In the Pacific this can only be done satisfactorily from Guam, Hawaii and the U.S. West Coast. As it stands today, all three locations possess modern logistic, air and port facilities capable of supporting the entire range of U.S. forces. Hawaii and the U.S. West Coast need no discussion as they are already home to the majority of the units which can be forward deployed to the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans. Guam on the other hand serves as a forward logistic and repair facility. Until recently it was also home to one wing of B-52 strategic bombers.

When U.S. units are relocated outside of the Philippines, Guam should serve as the first choice for basing. It is U.S. territory, thus the possibility of a foreign host country telling the United States to pull out its bases is removed. This is the biggest factor in favor of relocating assets to Guam. Additionally, Guam is sizeable enough to support a large number of afloat units. Its harbor would have to be dredged to allow it to accommodate more types of ships (aircraft carriers) than it presently can. The dredging

operation would not be prohibitively expensive as it must be routinely done to keep the present harbor clear. It would be a matter of dredging the channel deeper than it currently is and opening new areas of the harbor which were not viewed as necessary prior to the need to relocate forces.

The ship repair facilities are adequate to handle current peacetime operations. With the addition of the four floating dry docks from Subic Bay, the shipyard could handle repairs to all size ships except aircraft carriers. Navy submarine and destroyer tenders also routinely call at Guam and these units could supplement the repair capabilities of the Ship Repair Facility (SRF). Anderson Air Force Base, now that the B-52's have left, could handle any influx of new aircraft relocated from the Philippines. The base is structured to provide support for day to day, as well as, combat operations. The Air Force would probably want to expand the airfield capabilities located on nearby Saipan and Tinian Islands. These would be used as alternate landing fields to reduce possible congestion at Anderson Field on Guam.

The supply facilities on Guam are well developed although they are not as extensive as those found in the Philippines. However, they are capable of supporting forward deployed ships and aircraft. The ammunition and petroleum products storage facilities would probably not have to be expanded to support deployed units.

In addition to SRF and Anderson Air Force Base, Guam is home to Agana Naval Air Station. Navy patrol, logistic and other special purpose aircraft already operate from there. The operations of the air station are capable of being expanded without much additional construction. Located on Guam are also some very sophisticated command, control, communication and intelligence facilities which could take over the Philippine functions. The

usual administrative, medical and other support services associated with large Navy and Air Force concentrations are there also.

In sum, the basic infrastructure of Guam could support a relocation of assets from the Philippines and is the best site for relocation of the Philippine bases. It would not be free of charge to relocate because some expensive construction and upgrading of facilities would have to be conducted. However, it would still be much less expensive than starting with nothing as the U.S. might have to do if it moved to another area. The money being spent would also be spent by Americans on American soil to Americans instead of to foreigners on foreign soil. It must be pointed out though, that Guam can not completely replace the Philippine bases. Guam can serve ideally as a forward support base but it has its limitations.

The major limitation Guam has is its geographic position. It is a small island located approximately 1,500 nautical miles from the South China Sea. It would require about 3-4 steaming days for ships to reach the region. This relative geographic isolation makes it more difficult, but not impossible, to conduct operations in the Southeast Asian region. Without Subic Bay, U.S. ships operating in the South China Sea would have to rely more extensively on underway replenishment. Routine port visits at Singapore could act as a supplement to underway replenishment.

Airborne logistics flights to the Indian Ocean would also be effected by the location of Guam. Aircraft supporting Diego Garcia from Guam would not be able to fly with capacity loads, as they do now out of Clark. They do not have the fuel to make it nonstop. This would not matter if landing rights are retained at Singapore. But if the landing rights are not maintained, the aircraft would have to fly with less cargo and therefore less efficiency.

A second limitation which Guam has is that it is located in the spawning grounds for typhoons. Periodically during typhoon season, late spring through early fall, operations at Guam must be suspended or restricted as typhoons pass near or over the island. As ships and aircraft have been operating year round out of Guam for nearly half a century, typhoons should not be a severe limitation on relocating units to that island. However, this limitation must be taken into account.

Thirdly, Guam has a serious labor shortage, in part due to its small population, as well as labor being drawn away to support the expanding tourist industry. This problem could be resolved through the use of contract labor services. This system, using primarily skilled Filipino workers is currently being successfully employed at United States facilities in Diego Garcia.

Lastly, Guam lacks some of the sophisticated training ranges which were extensively used in the Philippines. A facility such as the Crow Valley tactical aviation range could not be replicated on Guam. The island is too small. Tactical aircraft would have to perform their training elsewhere, possibly in Thailand. For the Navy, a naval gun fire support and missile range would need to be constructed. This is possible to do, if not on Guam then on Tinian or Saipan Islands. The costs associated with building these new training ranges would not be prohibitively expensive.

In view of the present world situation and the planned reductions in the U.S. Pacific Command these limitations may not have as a severe impact on relocation to Guam as they may have once had.

## **CONCLUSION**

The closure of Subic Bay Naval Complex appears to be certain. The Filipinos through their elected officials, and in accordance with the Philippine Constitution, have dictated that the base be closed by 31 December 1992. This date is rapidly approaching. A decision must be made soon to find an alternative location for the base. This essay examined various alternatives for relocating the base and concluded that Guam offered the best site.

Even though Guam can not fully replace the facilities located in the Philippines, its primary attractions of being U.S. sovereign territory and already possessing substantial logistics, port, air and maintenance support facilities make it the best alternative to any other bases relocated to foreign soil. Although Guam does have the basic infrastructure, additional construction and upgrading of those facilities must be accomplished prior to its being fully able to support Western Pacific operations. Some of the money saved by not having to pay compensation to the Philippines could be used to pay for this.

In addition, a portion of the money could also be obligated to construct ten more support or logistic type ships which would be required to support forward operations in the Southeast Asian region. A mix of two destroyer tenders (AD), two submarine tenders (AS), two stores ships (AFS) and four combat logistic support ships (AOE) would be adequate to provide the required logistics/maintenance support. These ships would enhance the mobility of afloat units as well as cut down dependency on foreign shore based resupply. This does not imply however, that the United States should not continue to maintain its aviation landing privileges, especially at Singapore, or that U.S. force should not continue to make routine portcalls in

Southeast Asian ports. They both enhance the image of continuing U.S. presence in the region.

Subic Bay does make it much easier for U.S. forces to operate in Southeast Asia. Yet, it is not critical for the survival of the United States. Alternatives exist, particularly at Guam, which allow U.S. forces to carry out the same missions conducted from the Philippines. As stated in President Bush's 1991 National Security Strategy of the United States: "Our enduring interests in East Asia and the Pacific also demand forces sufficient to meet our responsibilities and to sustain our long-term relationships with friends and allies."<sup>40</sup> Admiral Robert J. Kelly, Commander in Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet, echoed those statements when he said: "...[W]e now are going to have to find other places to carry out the many functions that we perform in the Philippines. We fully intend to continue our forward presence in the Pacific."<sup>41</sup>

In view of the present world geo-strategic situation, Guam offers the best and probably the most affordable option to carry out our national security strategy in Asia and the Pacific



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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Base closings major move," *Sentinal* 31 December 1991, sec. A, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Philip Shenon, "Subic Bay Pact Moves to New Arenas," *New York Times INTERNATIONAL*, 17 September 1991, sec. A, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Philip Shenon, "Aquino Revokes Eviction Notice for a U.S. Base," *New York Times INTERNATIONAL*, 18 September 1991, sec. A, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York, NY: Random House Inc. 1987).

<sup>5</sup>Kenneth J Hagan *This People's Navy* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1991), p. 196.

<sup>6</sup>Georgia C. Sadler, "Philippine Bases: Going, Going, Gone?", *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* November, 1988, p. 90.

<sup>7</sup>Gregorio F. Zaide, *Philippine Political and Cultural History (Vol III), The Philippines Since the British Invasion* (Manila, PI: Philippine Education Company, 1957), pp. 310-314.

<sup>8</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Military Bases" *Treaties and other International Acts Series*, TIAS 1775 (Washington D.C. Government Printing Office, 1947), p. 57.

<sup>9</sup>Gregorio F. Zaide, p. 311.

<sup>10</sup>Roland G. Simbulan, *The Bases of Our Insecurity* (Manila, RP: BALAI Fellowship, Inc. 1985), p. 280.

<sup>11</sup>Art. XVIII of the Philippine Constitution states: After the expiration in 1991 of the Agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America concerning Military Bases, foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a

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treaty duly concurred in by the Senate and, when the Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose, and recognized as a treaty by the other contracting State. (Drawn from *The Philippine Bases: Negotiating For the Future*, Fred Green ed., (NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 1988)

<sup>12</sup>Philip Shenon, "Aquino May Agree to a U.S. Pullout Over 3 Years," *New York Times INTERNATIONAL* 25 September 1991, sec. A, p. 18.

<sup>13</sup>Tuan Haji Syed Hussain, "Special Report: Philippine Secretary of National Defense and ADJ's Publisher & Editor in Chief: Questions and Answers", *Asian Defense Journal* (Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Perwira Sdn. Bhd. January, 1989), p. 30.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>15</sup>Simbulan, p. 217.

<sup>16</sup>Hussain, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup>Peter. Lewis Young, "The Future of the US Bases in the Philippines - Part II", *Asian Defense Journal* (Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Perwira Sdn. Bhd. February, 1989), p. 26.

<sup>18</sup>Fred Greene, ed., *The Philippine Bases: Negotiating For The Future*, (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 1988), p. 65.

<sup>19</sup>"U.S. To Pay \$1.46 Billion", Far East Broadcasting Company in English, Manila, 17 October, 1988, as recorded by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS-EAS-88-202, pp. 50-51, 19 October, 1988.

<sup>20</sup>Peter Lewis Young, "The Future Dispersal of U.S. Military Power in the Asia-Pacific Region-Problems for Philippines Security?", *Asian Defense Journal* (Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Perwira Sdn. Bhd. September, 1991), p. 25.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>22</sup> Greene, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Peter. Lewis Young, "The Future of the US Bases in the Philippines - Part I", p. 20.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Shenon, "Aquino May Agree to a U.S. Pullout Over 3 Years," *New York Times INTERNATIONAL* 25 September 1991, sec. A, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> Article III states: The Parties, through their Foreign Ministers or their deputies, will consult together from time to time regarding the implementation of this Treaty and whenever in the opinion of either of them the territorial integrity, political independence or security of either of the Parties is threatened by external armed attack in the Pacific.

<sup>26</sup> Article 6 of the Military Assistance Agreement.

<sup>27</sup> George Bush, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Service, 1991), pp. 5-6.

<sup>28</sup> Greene, p. 52.

<sup>29</sup> *Background on the Bases; American Military Facilities in the Philippines*, (Washington D.C.: United States Information Service, 1987), p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> James A. Gregor and Virgilio Agnon, *The Philippine Bases-U.S. Security at Risk*, (Los Angeles: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1987), p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Bedford, *Defense and Disarmament News*, October-November 1985, p. 4.

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<sup>32</sup>Norman D. Palmer, *Westward March The United States & the Changing Western Pacific*, (London: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers Inc., 1987), p. 110.

<sup>33</sup>Kennith Hunt, Masataka Kosaka, eds. *Asian Security 1988-1989*, (London, Brassey's Defense Publishers, 1988), p. 91.

<sup>34</sup>Peter Lewis Young, "The Future of the US Bases in the Philippines - Part I", p. 23.

<sup>35</sup>Michael Richardson, "Life After Subic", *Asian Defense Reporter*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, November, 1991, (Canberra: Peter Isaacson Publications, 1991), pp. 31-32.

<sup>36</sup>"Singapore Agrees to Replace Philippine Base", *Sentinal* 4 January, 1992, sec. A, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup>Tun Hwa Ko, "Taiwan as a Strategic Asset", *Global Affairs*, Vol IV, No 2, Spring 1989, (New York, NY: International Security Council, 1989) pp. 65-83.

<sup>38</sup>"Smooth Start of Japan-US Defense Cooperation Urged" *Tokyo Shimbun*, 18 March, 1989, as translated by American Embassy, Tokyo.

<sup>39</sup>Greene, p. 113.

<sup>40</sup>George Bush, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Service, 1991), p. 28.

<sup>41</sup>James D. Hessman and Vincent C Thomas Jr., "A Pacific Presence—Interview with Probert J. Kelly, CINCPACFLT", *Seapower*, Vol. 34, No. 12, December 1991, p. 8.

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